

Recruit Company Mentor Guide

Coast Guard Training Center Cape May

Introduction



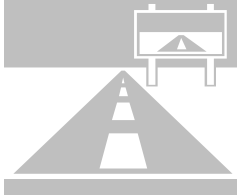
Congratulations on being selected to mentor a recruit company. You'll find the opportunity to be one of the most rewarding experiences of your career. This guide was written by a former mentor to help guide you through the process.

The simple key to success as a mentor is: **active involvement**. Engage the recruits and stay involved. Don't just show up for your two sessions and disappear! Instead, remain fully engaged throughout and after the recruits' training; partner with your company commanders (CCs) to make mentoring a rich experience for your recruits.

You will most likely be mentor for two companies, each of which has 38-90 recruits. These companies are considered "sister" companies that, although they have identical schedules, have separate sets of CCs. Each company has a lead CC and one or two assistant CCs. Note that the lead CC may actually be junior in rank to one of the assistant CCs – this happens frequently as assistant CCs break-in and become qualified to serve as lead CCs.

You will be profoundly impressed with the professionalism of the CCs and develop a newfound respect for what happens at Cape May.

First Visit



Your first visit will be at about Day 10 of training, during the second week. The Training Center Public Affairs Officer will let you know your visit dates. E-mail your CCs well in advance of your first visit and let them know exactly when you'll arrive/depart. Wear Tropical Blue Long or Service Dress Blue for your visits. Remember that Cape May gets quite cold in the winter. Recruits and Training Division Staff do not wear the Tropical Blue Long uniform year round.

Arrange your own lodging; the CCs are busy enough and don't have the time to arrange your travel. The Grand Hotel is nice and within per diem. There is also a Mentor VIP room in the Permanent Party UPH. You can reserve the Mentor VIP room with the Chief Master-At-Arms at (609) 898-6224. E-mail your CCs before you arrive and ask how the companies are doing. Plan on spending the entire day with the companies, although your talk will most likely be in the evening after chow. Ask the CCs if you can join them for lunch and dinner and get their permission to shadow the companies for the day. During that day, just observe the companies and get to know the CCs. Ask questions about the training process. Don't interact with the recruits during your day with them – they're still adjusting to recruit training and need to only focus on their training. Wait for the evening talk.

Your first talk will be in a classroom setting. The CCs will not attend – it'll be just you and the recruits. You'll have one to three hours with them, based on what works with your schedule. Give the recruits a restroom and water break every hour. You'll find your recruits tired, a

bit dazed, but extremely interested in talking with you about the Coast Guard. Your message should be very clear: that the recruits have absolutely, positively made the best decision of their lives – becoming a part of the U.S. Coast Guard.

Introduce yourself and give your background. Talk about the exciting things that have happened to you in your career; tell a few sea stories, which the recruits will soak in very wide-eyed! Do not stand with your hands in your pockets, as CCs strictly enforce this with the recruits.

Talk about the exciting times ahead...about what “big stuff” is happening in the USCG now...what lies ahead for our service...what they can expect when they graduate. Discuss different types of CG units. Poll the recruits to find out who’s interested in what career paths and ratings. Discuss the ratings and peak their interest. Discuss the “A” school and striking processes. Talk about the different geographic areas. Recruits will get their orders during Week 5.

Open it up for questions. You can plan on the recruits asking many, many questions, even though it’s early in their training. Plan on at least an hours worth of questions.

After your first visit, send an e-mail during week 3 and week 4 to each CC containing a motivational message for your companies – ask the CCs to post them on the bulletin board. Here’s an example:

India/Juliet 167 Shipmates --

Congratulations on completing the first half of your basic recruit training! I'm getting great reports on you all. I am proud to be your company mentor and proud of you all for your great accomplishments -- but even more proud to serve alongside you in the most distinguished and professional Armed Service on the planet.

I'm looking forward to our next visit the weekend of 13 February. Our last talk was a terrific time for me -- I was very, very impressed with each and every one of you in I/J 167. Please start thinking of questions you'd like me to answer when we next meet.

Take care of one another; your shipmates need you but you need them more. Pitch in and help. If someone's struggling, pile on the help and concern. You're forming friendships now that you'll keep the rest of your lives, so invest in your company mates.

Hang tough and steer a steady course! See you next weekend!

Second Visit



Your second visit will be at the end of Week 5. The recruits will have received their orders by then. Make sure you e-mail your CCs well in advance so they know your exact schedule. Just as with your first visit, plan on spending the entire day with your companies during your second visit; eat chow with your CCs and shadow the companies. Your recruits will greet you by name this time since they know you.

For your talk, prepare three or four talking points – things to drive home to the recruits to lock in their success as junior Coast Guard members. Yes, a lecture. They need to hear it from you. Talk about alcohol abuse, financial responsibility and listening to the Chiefs. Get the recruits to pledge to you to follow up on your talking points. For example, a mentor asked them flat out to pledge to abstain from alcohol consumption for their first six months of service, to not get in deep debt by purchasing an expensive new car, and to promise to get

in touch with their Chief (be it supervisor, OinC, Command Chief, etc.) the instant they need help or are standing into danger. They all very enthusiastically agreed.

After your talking points, you'll want to open it up for questions. Since they have orders, they'll want to talk about their new units. It'll be impossible to discuss each of the 90 units individually, so group like units together and discuss those. Mention what to expect when they report aboard a patrol boat, large cutter, station, PSU, etc. Try and limit specific unit information and keep it general, since there's just not enough time to talk specific units.

Bring 90 business cards with you to hand them out. If you like, let the recruits know to contact you after graduation and to keep in touch. Some mentors bring other types of give-aways to hand out to those recruits who scored 100% on their mid-term test – items like unit coins, a unit ballcap or any unit promotional items that your morale committee purchased go like hotcakes. Keep it fun and light.

E-mail your recruits during Week 6 and Week 7. Here's an example:

At the homestretch, India & Juliet 167! It was an honor speaking with you at our last visit. Thank you for your enthusiasm, attention and great questions! Being your company mentor has been a highlight of my 23-year Coast Guard career.

You have a short 10 days to go until graduation -- hang tough and stick it out! I am overwhelmed by your successes as I keep getting glowing reports on you from your Company Commanders. You have developed into distinguished, cohesive crews. Keep it up; help each other; don't let any shipmate fall behind whatsoever. Run – no, sprint to the finish line with pride! In a few short weeks you'll get some well deserved leave and report to your first duty stations. Show your new crewmembers your I/J 167 professionalism!

I will see you all next Thursday for graduation practice and for our company pizza parties. I look forward to talking with you all again then!

Graduation



Graduation is always on Friday of Week 8. If your schedule allows, arrive so you can spend Thursday with your companies, attend rehearsal, and attend the traditional pizza party Thursday night. Get the CCs permission (hopefully an invitation) to attend the pizza party. Based on season, uniform for graduation is SDB Bravo or Tropical Blue Long (01 Apr – 31 Oct) with Combination Cap. Look sharp; get your SDB jacket fitted; shine your shoes.

If there's time available, ask your CCs for the opportunity to address the companies one final time, briefly. Mention how proud you are of each graduate, reiterate your talking points as reminders, and wish them the best. You can also address your recruits at the pizza party, which is in lieu of Thursday dinner, right after graduation rehearsal. The party is also a morale night; there will be skits, but the highlight is when each company presents each of their CCs with their handmade ditty bags, decorated to reflect the character of the CC and the company.

At graduation, you line up behind TRACEN CO in the passageway and sit to his right. You will accompany the TRACEN CO to present awards; let the CO present, then when he moves down the line, shake/greet the award winner, as during an inspection. When graduates receive their certificate covers, you'll go up with TRACEN CO

to meet/greet the graduates as they stream by. You're to the CO's left to the left of the podium as you look out.

You are the special graduation guest speaker. Your speech should be very short: 3-4 minutes maximum. Refer to your companies using the format "India/Juliet One Six Seven" vice "India Juliet One sixty-seven" to be consistent with the CCs' terminology. Address your recruits in your speech, not the audience. Your speech should be good frank advice for your recruits to follow and to guarantee their success in the fleet – it shouldn't be an overarching CG position/policy speech. Use a traditional speech opening such as "Captain <name>, Commander <name, the Training Officer>, distinguished guests, Coast Guard friends and families, and the men and women of <your companies>." End the speech with a very motivating "thank you very much, God Bless America and Semper Paratus!" or something similar.

After Graduation



Your service as mentor does not have to end at graduation. If you choose, you can and should continue serving as mentor to your graduates for the rest of their careers! This obviously will take regular, consistent effort to reach out, connect and communicate.

To help do this, make sure you get a printout of all graduates and their new duty stations from the CCs. Also, check CGMS, print and retain the message that TRACEN sends on recruit graduates and their reporting dates – this will be invaluable later in tracking down your graduates.

Ask your recruits to promise to e-mail you a month or so after reporting to their new units. Ask them to tell you how they're settling in, what problems they're having and what their first impressions are.

If any graduates are stationed near you, visit them regularly. If any are stationed at a unit where you know the command cadre, e-mail the unit and put in a good word for your graduate. Keep your list handy so if you're visiting a unit, you can determine if one of your graduates is attached to that unit.

Send the CCs an e-mail after graduation with mentor contact information. You can send the lead CCs a thank-you note, thanking them for their assistance and help to you as mentor.

Conclusion



Being a recruit training company mentor is guaranteed to be an enriching experience for you. You'll always be glad you committed to the position, especially the significant travel that is involved. Your recruits benefit directly from your dedicated efforts and **active involvement** – so engage and remain engaged!

Best of luck, Company Mentor!